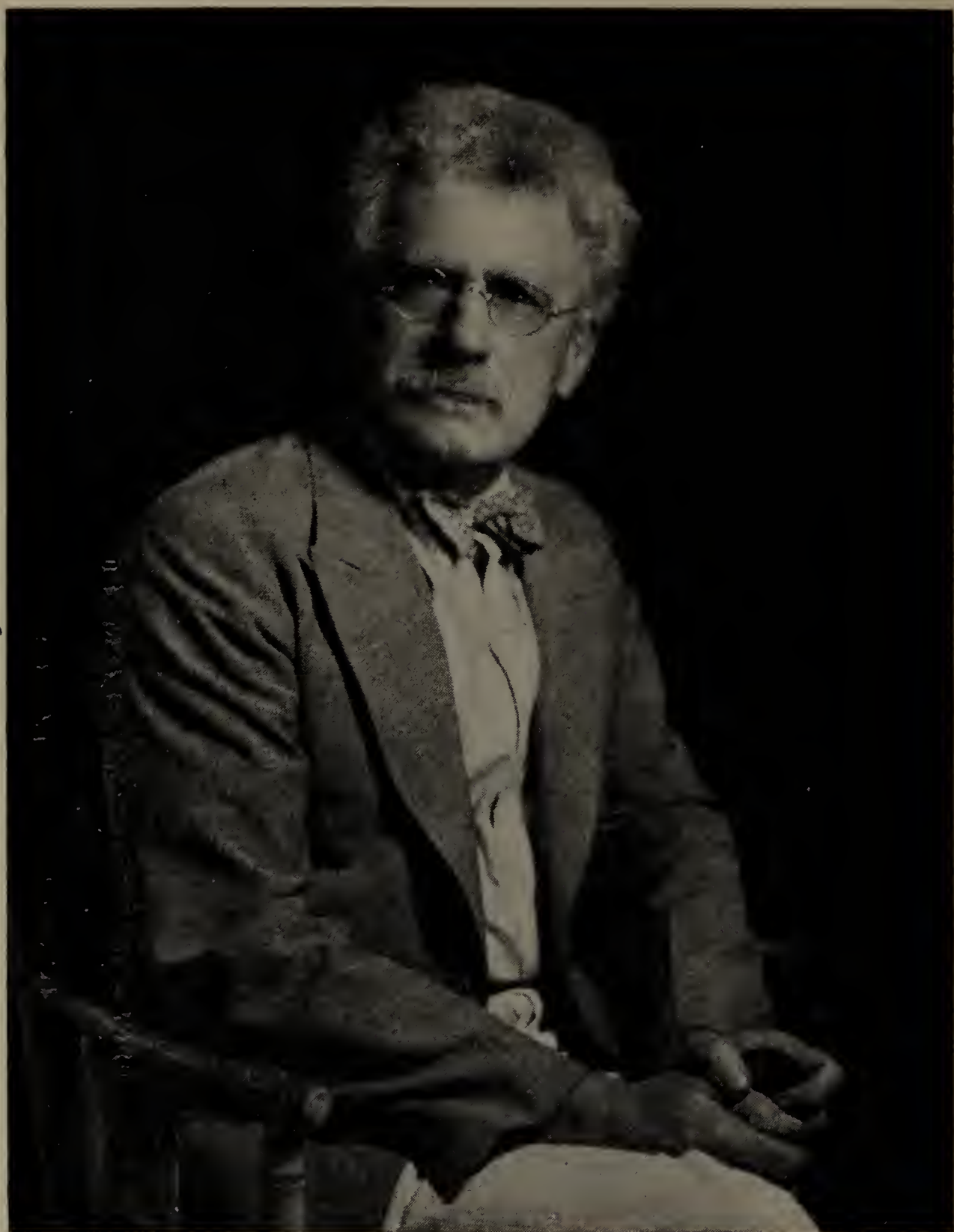M. L

GENEALOGY COLLECTION

1945

NOTES

on the Name and the Family of

SPARGO

OF MABE PARISH IN CORNWALL

By JOHN SPARGO

1945

To

My Children and my Grand-Children, and to all our widely-scattered Kinsfolk, these brief Notes upon the Ancient Name and Early History of the Spargo family of Cornwall, England, are Dedicated as a Service of Duty and Friendship, in the Hope that it will add to their Just Pleasure and Proper Pride in their Ancient and Honorable Patronymic.

"Nestledown"   JOHN SPARGO.
Old Bennington, Vermont.

The name Spargo is rather uncommon in the United States, and almost equally so in England. People bearing the name are widely scattered throughout Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and South Africa. Here in the United States people named Spargo, other than members of my own immediate family, have come to my notice in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Georgia, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Utah, Montana and California. Others bearing the name have come to my notice in the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec.

In 1918 Signor Francesco Nitti, the famous Italian statesman, called my attention to the fact that there was an Italian family in Florence whose patronymic was identical with my own. Unfortunately, none of this family could give any information concerning the family history extending backwards further than their grandparents, two generations. Signor Nitti said he had a vague impression that the name was in some manner associated with that of Dante, one Spargo having been related to, or a friend of, the poet. Signor Nitti was quite convinced that my family must have been Italian originally, some members of it settling in England and founding a new family there without changing the name in any way.

I told Signor Nitti that when I was in my early teens my granduncle, James Spargo, told me that he had come across a reference, in an old document, to one Johanes Spargo, who was described as "the Florentine." That seemed to the Italian statesman to be a strong confirmation of his theory but I was not convinced. No argument or evidence that has ever been presented in support of the theory that the family originated in Italy has been com-

A SKETCH MAP OF THE PARISH OF MABE
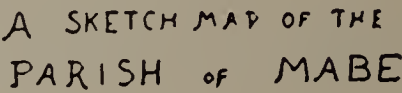
parable to the weight and mass of the historical evidence of a different origin of both the patronymic and the family.

My studies in the early history and antiquities of Cornwall and the Cornish people would not permit me to accept the too plausible theory of the Italian origin of the Spargo name and family. More than fifty years ago, I was one of a small group which founded the Camborne Antiquarian Society, at Camborne, the principal mining town in Cornwall. I was the youngest of the enthusiastic antiquarians. We unearthed a number of Celtic and Druidic remains. I believe that the society still exists, or did until a few years ago, and that during its existence it has made important and substantial additions to the sum of knowledge about early Cornwall.

My acquaintance with Cornish antiquarian lore made me aware, many years ago, that the present form of the name is comparatively modern, dating back not more than perhaps three hundred years or so. Anciently it was spelled "Spergor" or "Sperger." By itself that fact is sufficient to discredit the Italian-origin theory. Quite apart from the absence of the slightest bit of evidence, there is something fantastic in the measure of its inherent improbability. To believe, without a single fact upon which to base the belief, that some Italian named "Spargo" left Italy and settled in Cornwall, had numerous descendants, all of whom adopted the spelling "Spergor" or "Sperger," which they used for centuries, and that after the passage of those centuries the Italian form was resumed by all those Cornish descendants of the unrecorded Italian ancestor, is impossible for rational minds.

Those who have supported the theory of the Italian origin of our family have been influenced by the name, which they have assumed must be Italian: ergo the family must be of Italian origin. To account for the transplantation of a branch of an Italian family of the name in Cornwall they have advanced two hypotheses, both admittedly pure guesses. One is that some Italian sailor or fisherman, victim of shipwreck or other disaster at sea, may have been rescued and brought ashore by Cornish sailors or fishermen, remained in Cornwall and married instead of return-

ing to his native land. The other guess is that in pre-Reformation days some priest from Italy, on mission service in Cornwall, became the founder of a new branch of his family that bore his patronymic. In this connection it should be remembered that it was not until the middle of the twelfth century that marriage of the clergy of the Latin Church was forbidden and outlawed. It is well-known that it continued in many out-of-the-way places for another century. It is also a well-known fact that the Registers of Cornwall contain numerous entries of children, the issue of priests and single, unmarried women. In other words these children were born in what would, if the fathers had been laymen instead of priests, have been perfectly honest wedlock.*

Such guesses as those we are discussing are amusing only. They are in nowise helpful to the serious historian. Obviously, the procedure in both guesses can be reversed, with much greater plausibility, to sustain a theory of the Cornish origin of the Spargos of modern Italy. A Cornish sailor or fisherman named Spargo, the victim of shipwreck or other disaster at sea, or perhaps a deserter from his ship, finds himself in Italy, where he remains, marries and thus founds a new Italian branch of an old Cornish family. The fact that in Cornwall the name is common and the bearers of it numerous, whereas in Italy the name is exceedingly rare and the bearers of it very few, makes the theory of Cornish origin of the Italian Spargos more plausible than the other theory, the Italian origin of the Cornish Spargos. And, if we must indulge in speculations concerning possible ecclesiastical origins, it is easier to imagine the descendant of some Cornish priest and a single woman settling in Italy. Here, again, we have to reckon with the fact that the number of people in Cornwall named Spargo has been relatively large, continuously for many centuries, whereas in Italy there never have been many and we, do not have any evidence that there were any in ancient times. I do not offer either theory seriously. The fact that Spargo is a Cornish place name, properly understood, settles the argument.

* *The History of Glasney Collegiate Church, Cornwall.* By Thurstan C. Peter, p. 77.

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As I have already observed, the members of the family named Spargo living in Florence, Italy, in 1918, could throw no light whatever upon their ancestry or family history, and I made no attempt to investigate the matter. But through the years I have tried to learn the antecedents and ancestral backgrounds of all persons named Spargo I have come across or heard of in this country, Canada, Australia and South Africa, as well as those scattered throughout Great Britain. In a surprisingly small number of instances people bearing the name had not the faintest idea of their forebears or whence they came. But in the vast majority of cases there was either tradition or records, or both, of Cornish origins. And most of these people had either some family record mentioning one or more of four Cornish parishes, or they had family traditions in which one or more of those same parishes featured. The four parishes are Mabe, Constantine, Stithians and Mylor.

II

The map of Mabe parish which accompanies this essay shows the boundaries of these parishes in their relation to each other. Mabe lies some three miles above the seaport and harbor of Falmouth. It will be noted that in the lower half of the parish there are two place-names "Lower Spargo" and "Higher Spargo" respectively. Dividing the two places is the parish church and its land, the church, with an ancient stone of supposed Celtic origin beside it, being indicated on the map by a small sketch. The two places, former farm estates, thus separated by the church were originally one estate, Spergor, the home of the Spergor family, to use the ancient spelling. When was it thus divided in twain by the building of the church? The answer to that question is, quite obviously, of great importance in our present discussion.

By way of a partial answer we have the following facts: In the year 926 A.D., in the reign of Aethelstan the Saxon, grandson of Alfred the Great, the Diocese of Cornwall was formed, with its See at St. Germans. Centuries before that time the Celtic Church existed in Cornwall and there is much evidence that it existed in the districts we now know as Mabe, Constantine, Gluvias and Mylor parishes. The Celtic Church was Christian. It was, in fact, the first British Church. There is little doubt that it was formed during the Roman occupation of Britain and we may be sure that missionaries from Rome were its principal founders, converting many of the Celts to Christianity. These Celtic Christians built many churches. Perhaps "baptisteries" is a better description of many of them. Each was independent of all others. There was nothing similar to diocesan organization, to say nothing of organization upon national lines. Most often the churches were simple and even rude oratories, each in the center of a monastic

enclosure. The church or oratory was usually a building of unmortared stones and was surrounded by the huts or cells of the monks and other members of the monastic community. Some of these churches were built during the fourth century. But more of them were built late in the fifth century and the first half of the sixth, in what has been called the Golden Age of the Saints, which followed the decline of Celtic Christianity after 410 A.D.

When the Diocese of Cornwall was formed, in 926 A.D., in the reign of Aethelstan, and by his decree, the Celtic monasteries were incorporated in the diocese and their churches and lands were expropriated and declared to belong to and be part of the endowments of the diocese. The churches which had been built for monastic use and had been so used up to then began to be used as parish churches. Thus the Diocese of Cornwall took over the monastery and church which, centuries earlier, had been built upon the Spergor (Spargo) estate, dividing it in two parts. These separated Spergor (Spargo) lands constituted the endowment of the monastery at the time of the expropriation. So much we know. We know also that Spergor (Spargo) was both a place name and a family patronymic, persons of that name residing there at the time of the expropriation of the monastery by the Diocese of Cornwall in 926 A.D., and continuously thereafter for the next thousand years. Historically, therefore, our family name is one of the oldest in Cornwall, or in all England, of which there is incontestable record.

When we join to the fact that Spergor (Spargo) was both the place name and the family name the subsequent connection of members of the family with the Church, we are compelled to believe that members of the family were prominent members of the small monastic community, probably among its founders. When the monastery was established is not definitely known. It may have been prior to 400 A.D., and certainly was not later than 500 A.D. It probably was established early in the fifth century, before 450 A.D. We are reasonably certain, then, that the family of Spergor (Spargo) and the estate of that name were established some time prior to 450 A.D.

From about 43 A.D. to 84 A.D., throughout the Roman occupation of Britain, Christianity made considerable progress among the Celtic Britons. Numerous monasteries and churches were built. Many of these were built upon the sites of Druidic and other pagan places of worship and sacrifice. This is true of some, if not most, of the monastic communities of Cornwall. There are many relics of Druidism and other forms of nature worship, all pre-Christian and affording indubitable proof of the fact that before the dawn of Christianity, the inhabitants of Cornwall were nature worshippers and that on and near the sites of their places of worship and sacrifice the earliest monasteries were erected. The reasons for this and for the fact that the early Celtic Christians took over with them into Christianty so many pagan rites, ceremonials, feasts and symbols are well understood. There is no mystery about it. The more they retained of the external forms of the old nature worship, infusing them with the content of new meanings, the easier was the work of proselytising.

At Mabe there are many evidences of pre-Christian nature worship by Druids and others, together with considerable indications of Phallic worship. It is agreed by most of the learned authorities that the great rocks called "Menhirion," which are found in many places in Brittany were connected with the cult of Phallicism. In Brittany it is common enough to see these Menhirion in churchyards decorated with Christian symbols, testifying to the triumph of Christianity over the pagan religion they originally represented. In Cornwall there are very few Menhirion, identified as such by scholars. One of these is only a few yards away from the south west corner of Mabe parish church. It stands six feet above the ground and is about two feet six inches square in the section near the middle. It is granite, unhewn, except that at some comparatively modern date some one cut a place on its top to hold a lantern to guide people entering and leaving the church. The small sketch on our map shows this relic of pre-Christian pagan religion.

Not far away, at Ethorn, in a field, there is another large rock which most modern Cornish archeologists have

pronounced a true Menhirion. It is also indicated upon our map. This stone stands about eight feet above the ground. Like the one by the parish church, it is granite, unhewn. It is much more slender than the other. It is impossible for one who has any knowledge of the subject at all to look upon this rock without being reminded of other memorials of ancient Phallic worship. Some noted scholars have held the view that some of the best known of the Celtic crosses in Cornwall were originally Menhirion, erected in connection with pre-Christian pagan worship, converted into Christian symbols by Christian missionaries. That view has been expressed of the great Celtic cross in Mylor churchyard.

I think that traces of graves and some human remains have been found near the foot of the Menhir at Ethorn and also of the one near the parish church. Some have assumed that these human remains must date back to the time when the Menhirion were erected, or perhaps more than two thousand years before the Birth of Christ! There is nothing to warrant that belief. A much more plausible theory would be that after the coming of the missionaries, when Christianity was gaining supremacy over the old pagan religion, some proud Celtic nature worshipper, as his last act of devotion, chose the foot of the Menhir as his sepulcher. That would bring the human remains to about the period of the fourth century or later. Finally, there is no certain evidence, I believe, that the bones found date back even that far. It is at least possible that they were all several centuries short of a thousand years old.

It is highly probable that on the approximate site of the present parish church of Mabe religious worship of some kind, pagan or Christian, has been carried on pretty continuously for four thousand years. Most authorities on the subject would agree to that statement, I think. Even the long history of the English Church is dwarfed by that record.

I have wondered whether there was a direct connection between the pagan nature worshippers and the founders of the monastery at Mabe; whether the men who were members of the monastic community here, perhaps as

early as 450 A.D., some of whom may already have borne the Spergo (Spargo) patronymic, were the direct descendants of those Celtic pagan nature worshippers whose shrines and sacrificial altars were here centuries before Julius Caesar's raids, and of those who later became the first converts to Christianity during the early days of the Roman occupation. No definite and authentic answer can be given to that question. And I certainly shall not offer any guess of mine as a substitute for an authentic answer. All that lies back of the building of the monastery and church at Spergor (Spargo) some time during the fifth century, belongs to legend. From the building of the monastery, which probably was near 425 A.D., to the creation of the Diocese of Cornwall, in 926 A.D., we have a period of five hundred years, not wholly legendary, but entitled to be embraced within the sphere of history by reason of its cultural remains and relics. We assume that the name Spergor (Spargo) was borne in that dim period by the place upon which a monastic community dwelt and built its oratory. We do not know whether, within that period, men used that name as their patronymic. From the time of the creation of the Diocese of Cornwall, 926 A.D., when the name was already long established, there is more abundant definite evidence.

III

The name of Mabe parish itself is regarded as evidence
that anciently it was the seat of a monastery. That is the
judgment of most authorities. When I was a boy it was
believed by many belonging to my father's and mother's
generation that Mabe was a word that came from the old
and forgotten Cornish language, the meaning of which
was not known. Later, when my interest had led me to
acquire some knowledge of the Cornish language, I real-
ized that this belief was almost certainly erroneous and
based upon ignorance. The only word in the Cornish
language that in any way resembles "Mabe" is the word
"Mab," meaning "son of," the Cornish equivalent of the
Scotch word "Mac," which means the same thing. By
itself and otherwise than as a prefix to some other word
"Mab" as a place name would be impossible.

Henderson, to whose admirable monograph I am
much indebted, thinks that Mabe was originally a per-
sonal name, and that it was probably the name of a local
Cornish Saint of whose existence there is no other trace.
Many years ago the late Thurstan C. Peter, of Redruth,
told me that Mabe was not a Cornish word, but that it
might have been the name of one of the host of Cornish
Saints. There are many other instances of places in Corn-
wall bearing names that are apparently the names of Cor-
nish Saints of whose existence there is no other evidence
than that afforded by the place names. In the judgment
of this very able scholar, the name of the parish of Mabe
was derived from one of these forgotten and unknown
Saints.

Since the end of the sixteenth century the name has
been written in its present form, but earlier in that cen-
tury, 1525-1575, we find the place name written *Levabe*,
Lavabe and *Levape*. To one who knows anything of the

language and dialects of the Brythonic Celts the word *Lavabe* can have only one interpretation. It is a compound of *Lan*, the old Cornish word for church or monastery, with the word *Mabe*. One strong reason for believing that the latter word must be the name of a Saint is the fact that throughout Cornwall the word *Lan* when it occurs in a place-name is almost invariably linked to the name of the Saint who reputedly founded the church or monastery there. In the Cornish language the initial M changes to V when a feminine word, such as *Lan*, is placed before it. The last letter of the prefix is also dropped. Thus the Cornish word for Michael is *Myhal*, but the Church of St. Michael would not be written *Lan-Myhal* but *Lan-Vyhal*, otherwise *Lavyhal*. So, instead of *Lan-Mabe* we get *Lan-vabe*, otherwise *Lavabe*, meaning the *Lan*, or church, of *Mabe*. There is a place named *Tre-mabe*, near Liskeard. This name probably means the *home* or the *dwelling* of *Mabe*. St. Mabyn, near Wadebridge, may be related.

The word *Lan* in Cornish means something more than a single building called a chapel or church, as signified by the word *Eglos*. Its use almost invariably refers to a religious community or group with a church or shrine. On the map of the parish near where Mabe joins Constantine and Budock parishes Helland is indicated. This name is significant. In earlier days (1321) it was written *Hellan* in the records. Here we have another *Lan*, not used as a prefix as when united to the name of a Saint, but prefixed by an adjective meaning old. Helland means exactly what the Welsh *Hen-Llan* means, namely the Old monastery or church. In other words, the name indicates that it was an earlier monastery than the other at Spargo.

I do not pretend to be an authority on the ancient Cornish language, or even to possess an extensive knowledge of it. Actually, my knowledge of the language spoken by my Cornish ancestors is limited and fragmentary. At most I may claim to know something of the subject, of which very few people know anything at all. But I am quite confident that the summary of the matter that I have here given will be accepted as accurate by all

competent authorities. That the explanation I have given of the significance of Helland as a place-name is correct has been confirmed by the results of numerous excavations there during the nineteenth century, before I left Cornwall, and since. Human remains of great antiquity have been dug up here, giving to the area in which they were found the local name "graveyard." Archeologists have no doubt that at some remote time it was used as a burial place over a very considerable period of time.

Other remains have been dug up here also, including many ancient stones, the head of a very fine Celtic cross and a large stone bowl supposed to have been a font. This is of local moor-stone, about twenty inches high. It has been shaped and chiselled quite crudely, more or less in the shape of a wineglass above the stem. The bowl measures about eighteen inches in diameter at the top. It is almost impossible to doubt that this object is a religious font, of pre-Norman origin. If that is true, it is the oldest font in West Cornwall and one of a very few known fonts of pre-Norman origin.

The importance of establishing that Helland was the site of a monastery prior to the one at Spargo lies in this: it enables us to answer, with a close approach to finality, the question raised in a preceding paragraph. We conclude, not indeed with absolute certainty, but with the highest degree of probability, that the first oratory established by the original monastic community was at Helland, not at Spargo. The one established here was the second, but whether it was a case of removal by the original community to a new location, or of a new community set up in succession to one that had ceased to exist, is not known. We know that by 410 A.D., there had been a general decline in the condition of the Christian Church of Cornwall. This brought about a great increase in the activity of Christian missionaries from Brittany, Ireland and Rome. We associate the second monastic establishment in Mabe, the one at Spargo, with this missionary revival. Thus we get the period of 410-430 A.D., as the probable date of the establishment of the church and monastery on the estate called Spergor (Spargo) by a

group of Christians, one or more of whom bore the same name as the place.

It might be thought that the name itself would help by giving us some reliable evidence of its origin, but it does not. Indeed, the significance of the name Spergor or Spargo at such an early date, and the origin of it, have puzzled many scholars for centuries. There is no difficulty about the name itself. Quite obviously it is from the Latin—spargo—spargere—sparsi—sparsum. It means to scatter. But its meaning is not dependent upon etymology alone, but upon the association in which it is found. It means, for example, to scatter seed in sowing. It likewise means to scatter or disperse in flight, as when a swiftly advancing army chases and pursues its retreating enemy. It also means to spread out over a territory, as when troops concentrated at a given place spread out for strategical reasons. These illustrations will suffice for my present purpose.

IV

As I have already observed, the controlling fact is that we must try to account for it as a Cornish place-name. In early Cornwall the place-name came first; the family name came by assuming the place-name. Elsewhere, almost uniformly throughout England and America, we find that places derived their names from their owners. Family names came first and were applied to the places of residence of the owners. In Cornwall the opposite usage was the rule, almost uniform in early days. Thus Carclew being the name of the place, its owner would be, John, Thomas or Something Carclew of Carclew. And when the ownership of the place changed hands, the new owner, whatever his name may have been before, became John, Thomas or Something Carclew. Thus, it is not a question of some individual with a strange name settling and founding a family bearing his name. Instead, we have to account for the application of a name to a place and the use thenceforth of the name of the place as a family name.

Now, of all the possible meanings of the word we must consider those which could, without violence of interpretation, be applied to a place as its name. We might think the word appropriate as a name for a husbandman, he being a sower of seeds, but that signification of the word would not make it appropriate as a place-name, which must be suggestive of some prominent feature, such as a waterfall or a mill, or some event, or, finally, some personage, as a Saint, for example. As applied to the scene of a battle in which the Romans drove the Cornish before them, scattering them in disorder, the name would have been appropriate. But we have no evidence of such an event. The name would have been equally appropriate if applied to a concentration point from which the Roman

conqueror sent out forces in various directions. But if anything of the sort occurred we have no evidence of it. Yet some such happenings must have prompted the application of a pure Latin name to the place, one would think. Had the Celts named it because of some association with their arms they would have given it a Cornish-Celtic name not a Roman one.

We know that with the great increase in missionary activity, which began during the second decade of the fifth century, between 410 and 420 A.D., both Roman-Cornish and Breton-Cornish marriages became quite common. For the reason already given, that the name Spargo, in Cornwall, first appears as a place-name, its use as a family cognomen following in accordance with the ancient Cornish custom, it would be useless to seek in any such marriage the origin of the family name. It is of some interest but no real importance that I have not found the name in any glossary of Breton names.

Before turning from the Spargo name to other matters, it may be of some interest to some of those who bear the name to know that the place marked Higher Spargo is smaller than the one named Lower Spargo. In the records of 1324 A.D., the former is called Spergor-Vighan, which means the little or the lesser Spargo. In 1538 it is listed as Spargour, then owned by Richard Chiverton. In 1585 Lower Spargo is listed as Spargor-Veor, that is, Lower Spargo and as being then the property of William Carnsew. Later it passed to the noted Godolphin family through the marriage of Sir William Godolphin to a daughter by an earlier marriage of the widow of Sir Richard Carnsew who was knighted by James the First and died in 1629.

V

On the map there may be noted marked, on the very edge of Penryn, in the parish of Budock, the site of ancient Glasney College. Here, in 1265 A.D., there was founded a College which became famous throughout the whole of Europe. In ancient manuscripts this College is variously named. In some it is called the College and Church of The Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Thomas of Canterbury. In others it is called the College of St. Thomas of Glasnith, St. Thomas of Glaseneth, St. Thomas of Glaseneye, St. Thomas of Glasneye, St. Thomas of Glasney, and so on.

We know that the College was founded and the Collegiate Church built by Bishop Walter Bronescombe, otherwise William le Goode, who died in 1280 A.D. There is no doubt that it was dedicated to the memory of St. Thomas the Martyr, otherwise Thomas Becket. The appellation of Saint would not seem appropriate in the case of this strange, obstinate and worldly and theatrical archbishop who was murdered in 1170 A.D., by the minions of Henry the Second. But Becket was the first to oppose openly the growing tyranny of the Crown, particularly Henry's encroachments upon the rights and liberties of the Church. For this he was murdered in his cathedral at Canterbury. The same actions that won the hatred of the king and his minions won the admiration and affection of the people. They canonized him at once and very soon, in 1173 A.D., the pope followed their example. What the name Glasney means in *lingua Cornubiæ* is not clear. Authorities on the Cornish language differ in opinion. Most modern scholars incline to the belief that it means green (*glas*) marsh or mire (*wagmier*).

In the cartulary of this famous Collegiate Church and

College, it is recorded in 1341 A.D., that Sir Nicholas de Spergor, priest, was instituted chaplain. Apparently, this Nicholas de Spergor, priest, belonged to the chantry, or portion, known as "de Ponte." Sir William de Coesgaran, priest, who was chaplain of the College, having died, Sir Nicholas de Spergor was, on March 19, 1341, instituted as his successor. The "de" prefixed to the cognomen, contrary to a very widespread belief, does not indicate *noblesse*. It means "of" and nothing more than that. Its use in this instance has no significance other than that the Norman style was adopted by the recorder, whoever he may have been. It was his way of identifying the priest as Sir Nicholas Spergor (Spargo) of Spergor. (Spargo). The prefixed title, "Sir," would seem to indicate knighthood, assuming it to have been rightfully used. However, I have not found any evidence that knighthood was conferred upon any man bearing the name Spergor (Spargo). Because the priest who immediately preceded him as chaplain was also described as "Sir," as were several of those who succeeded him, including Sir Nicholas Kevel, who was instituted in 1357 A.D., I am inclined to believe that "Sir" was used as a courtesy title, without any legal sanction, in the case of priests attached to the College as chaplains, or that it was a title of rank recognized by, and only valid within, the College itself.

In any case it is interesting to find the name of our family thus honorably identified at this early date with the noble thirteenth century seat of learning. As a boy and very young man I visited the meagre ruins of this famous college with my cousins and various friends many times. I heard when I was a child many accounts of the ancient place of learning, but long ago forgot them. I have an idea that it was from some account of Sir Nicholas de Spergor, priest, who was chaplain at Glasney College, that traditions grew of the family having been founded by an important ecclesiastic of the Catholic Church, from Rome, and of the coat-of-arms once borne by the family. Glasney College and Collegiate Church were suppressed, I think, under the Act of 1545.

I have no means of knowing for certain whether this was the Nicholas Spergor who, on March 9, 1309, at an

Ordination, in the Chapel of St. Laudius, Mabe, was admitted to the "First Tonsure," the initial grade of the Minor Orders of priesthood. It is probable that this was the future College chaplain. Bishop Stapeldon consecrated the cemetery at Mabe and ordained no less than thirty-four candidates to the First Tonsure that day. Most of these candidates were from the surrounding parishes. Four were from Mabe, one of the four being Nicholas Spergor (Spargo). That date, March 9, 1309, is in many respects the most important in the history of the parish and church of Mabe. On that date, for the first time, the people of Mabe obtained the right to bury their dead in their own cemetery, instead of being compelled to carry them to Mylor cemetery, four miles distant, as they had been compelled to do from the beginning. Mention of this fact makes it necessary to explain the origin and meaning of ecclesiastical "Peculiars."

I have already noted the fact that the Diocese of Cornwall was formed in 926 A.D., in the reign of Aethelstan, the See being at St. Germans. In the year 1050 A.D., the See was moved to Exeter. The See of Exter thus became also the See of Cornwall. In theory, the Diocese of Cornwall continued to exist, but united to that of Devon and the Bishop of Exeter thus became Bishop of Cornwall likewise. So, from 1050 A.D. to the year of my own birth, 1876, the ecclesiastical capital of Cornwall was Exeter. In the latter year the Cornish See was re-established at Truro. As already noted, when the Diocese of Cornwall was first established the churches and lands of the suppressed Celtic monasteries became part of the endowment of the diocese. Transfer of the See to Exeter meant, of course, transfer of the diocesan properties and endowments to the control of the Bishop of Exeter. We find in Domesday Book that in 1085 A.D., the Bishopric of Exeter possessed a very large part of Mabe, Gluvias, Mylor and Budock parishes. The Manor of Treliever, which is spelled *Treliver* in Domesday Book, anciently included the whole of the parishes of Mabe, Mawnan and Budock, together with the larger part of Gluvias and Mylor and a smaller part of Constantine. Much of this had passed to the Bishopric of Exeter as part of the diocesan properties in Cornwall.

VI

In ancient times the boundaries of parishes were principally determined by the bishops. A parish was originally no more than a convenient district for the payment of Tithes. Parishes came after the establishment of dioceses. The Lord of the manor built the churches, or rebuilt them, nominated the priests to serve them and directed all his tenants where and when they must pay their Tithes. No matter whether the tenant was a freeman or a serf he had to pay Tithes as directed. And every Bishopric contained a Manor, of which the Bishop was Lord. So, when the Cornish diocese was united to that of Devon, the See being at Exeter, the Bishop of Exeter became Lord of the Manor of Penryn, which had previously been known as the Manor of Treliever.

As Lord of the Manor, the Bishop of Exeter had full control over the parishes and churches of Mabe, Mylor, Gluvias and Budock. Each of the four churches had formerly been an independent Celtic monastery embraced within a Celtic Bishopric in the judgment of most scholars. When, for purposes of ecclesiastical administration Cornwall was made an Archdeaconry, in 1100 A.D., the Bishop of Exeter reserved to the Bishopric the whole of the Manor of Penryn. This rich episcopal fief was excluded from the Archdeaconry in every particular. Not only did the Bishop of Exeter possess the revenues from the endowments, rentals and Tithes, and have full control over the clergy within the fief, but he had also jurisdiction in many other important matters, such as the probate of wills, the granting of divorces, the trial and judgment of persons charged with various offenses, slander and immorality among them. And the official designated by the Bishop exercised within the episcopal fief all the power and authority vested in the Archdeacon elsewhere. The four parishes and

churches occupied a peculiar relation to both the Arch-deaconry and the Bishopric. Such parishes and churches were called "Peculiars." Throughout England some Peculiars still exist, I believe. In ancient times they were numerous.

For some reason or reasons of administrative policy, which are unknown to us, the Bishop of Exeter constituted the four "Peculiars" into a Peculiar Deanery. This he practically divided into two more or less autonomous and independent districts or divisions. Gluvias and Budock were joined together under one priest. Similarly Mabe was joined to Mylor. Of course, under this arrangement, the church of the parish in which the incumbent lived possessed an advantage over the other. The church where the priest resided was the "mother church," the other one becoming, in fact, little if anything more than a chapel of ease. Mabe suffered by this arrangement for as long as it lasted, for seven and a half centuries, from 1100 to 1850; from the first year of the reign of Henry the First of Normandy to the second decade of the reign of Victoria. Entirely aside and apart from the special restrictions and disadvantages inherent in the fact that it was a Bishop's Peculiar, of which I will say something later, Mabe suffered from its inconvenient and unnatural union to, and dependence upon, Mylor.

The two parishes had little in common. The two parish churches were a full four miles apart. A part of Gluvias parish separated Mylor from Mabe. Mylor was the more important of the two parishes and was therefore the main concern of the incumbent and his place of residence. Very little attention was paid to Mabe by some of the early incumbents. Services were conducted often irregularly, by poorly paid, and, one fears, poorly equipped, assistants. For some of the services of the Church Mabe residents had to go to Mylor. Rare and scant are the mentions of Mabe in the registers of the early bishops. The fact that Mabe was noted for the number of Dissenters it contained, including Quakers, was no doubt due, in large part, to the neglect of which it was the victim in consequence of its subservience to Mylor.

I have already mentioned the fact that prior to March 9, 1309 A.D., the people of Mabe did not have the right to bury their dead in their own parish, but had to bury them in the cemetery of Mylor Church. When the Deanery of Penryn was set up in the episcopal fief, that special privilege of Mylor was established. It may have been designed originally to save the incumbent, by insisting that, instead of his going four miles to Mabe to bury the dead, the dead of Mabe must be brought to him to Mylor for burial. Then, in practice, the fees for graves and burial became a factor of some importance.

On March 8, 1308, the Bishop of Exeter, the brave and generous Walter Stapeldon, was holding his visitation at Penryn. To him came a deputation from Mabe, asking that the parish be empowered to establish its own cemetery and have it consecrated. In the deputation were men whose families were connected with the parish for many centuries. The spokesman was Walter de Carnduyou, the ancient Cornish spelling of the name that appears later on as Carnsew, the form in which it is indicated on the map. There was Geoffrey de Anter, whose name was presumably derived from the place now called Antron and so marked on our map. This form of the name dates from the seventeenth century, I believe. Unless I am mistaken, it was first used in the register about 1650 A. D. Previously, 1610-1620 A.D., it was spelled Antorne. In 1308 and 1343 it is spelled Anter. From the Glasney Cartulary, 1260 A.D., it seems clear that it was named from the river called Antre. Another member of the deputation was John de Trenewythe, whose name, meaning in Cornish New Town, appears on the map as Trenoweth. Finally, there was Nicholas de Tremoghe, which name appears on our map as Tremough.

These men, recorded in the Register of Bishop Stapeldon as parishoners of the "Chapelry of St. Laudius (*Capella Sancti Laudii*) near Penren," in Cornwall, explained that from "time-immemorial" their church had been a dependent of the Church of St. Melorus at Mylor, and was in fact no better than a chapel of the latter. As a consequence of this relationship, they had no cemetery of their

own at Mabe, but had to take their dead to Mylor for burial, full four miles away. The ancient Cornish way was to carry coffins all the way from the house to the grave by hand, the bearers gripping napkins passed through the coffin handles and carrying the load "underhand." The mourners, on foot, followed the coffin. The inconvenience of having to go such a distance can well be imagined. In bad weather particularly, a funeral procession over the rough roads was an ordeal.

Bishop Stapeldon appears to have favored the petitioners and approved their appeal immediately. However, the Provost of Glasney College had to be consulted, for the College was involved by its economic interest. The College was the owner of the Rectory, that is, the Great Tithe, of Mylor and Mabe, as well as other parishes. Because of this, the incumbents of those parishes were Vicars instead of Rectors. The Provost of Glasney College gave his consent to the granting by the Bishop of the Mabe petition, upon conditions which read strangely to us of today. The conditions were that twelve men from Mabe, belonging to St. Laudus, were to visit St. Melorus Church each year on St. Melor's Day, August 27, and bring with them as an offering twelve pence, one penny for each of the twelve, and present the offering in the church. This was to be done each year as a token and acknowledgment of the subservience of St. Laudus and Mabe to St. Melorus and Mylor. If the money was not paid in any year, at the time specified, the Official of the Peculiar Deanery was to have the power to force the parishoners of St. Laudus to pay double the amount on the following day and the like sum of twenty-four pence for each and every day that payment was delayed.

In addition, the people of St. Laudus undertook to bear certain expenses connected with their church, which hitherto had come from the income of the joint parishes. All the burden of maintaining the fabric of St. Laudus they now assumed for the first time. They also specifically agreed to bear all the expense of maintaining their chancel, including glass windows, Mass Books, Matins Books, and various ornaments. Finally, because they always had

maintained in repair a section of the stone hedge surround-
ing Mylor Churchyard, they agreed to continue doing so.
Presumably, in the case of funerals from Mabe, it had been
the custom to make an opening in the stone hedge at the
most convenient point to admit the coffin and mourners.
This would save some walking, a matter of importance to
those who had already walked four miles. Following the
burial the hedge was repaired. The first impression one is
apt to obtain from reading the terms of settlement is that
the Vicar of Mylor drove a hard bargain, notably in the
matter of the hedge. Why should the parishioners of
Mabe, with their own cemetery to maintain, continue to be
charged with any part of the maintenance cost of the one at
Mylor?

I think we must assume that the continuance of this
responsibility for the repair and up-keep of the hedge at
Mylor was provisional only and dependent upon the
breeching of the hedge at any future time for Mabe fu-
nerals. In other words, it was in the nature of a use-charge.
In spite of the fact that henceforth Mabe would have its
own consecrated cemetery, it was certain that, from time to
time, people who had loved ones buried at Mylor would
desire to be buried there too. Thus the widow living at
Mabe whose husband's remains were buried at Mylor
would desire to be buried there also, generally in the same
grave. On such occasions the hedge would be breeched
and repaired afterward.

Finally, it was part of the settlement that the Mabe
people would continue to pay "mortuary fees" as of old,
and on the same scale. I do not know exactly what these
fees were or to whom they had to be paid. From as many
"outstanding authorities" I have received three different
answers to my request for information on the point. Here
is the one which I think is probably correct: a mortuary
fee was a fee exclusive of and additional to the cost of the
grave, generally the prerequisite of the parish incumbent,
but sometimes paid to other designated persons. In this
case the mortuary fees may have been part of the revenues
of the College, in which case the interest of the College in
the matter was natural and justifiable. The agreement
upon this point protected the College.

VII

It is worthy of note that the case of the Mabe petitioners to Bishop Stapeldon was presented by Walter de Carnduwyou (Carnsew) whose son, John Carnduwyou (Carnsew) was one of the four young men from Mabe parish, including young Nicholas Spergor (Spargo), who were ordained to the "First Tonsure" on the same day that the new cemetery was consecrated. That date, March 9, 1309, is notable as the date upon which the most important event in the medieval history of Mabe parish and church occurred. The people of Mabe were fortunate in having secured so easily the right to establish their own cemetery. Some other parishes in a similar state of dependence on "Mother Churches," had to struggle for years, carrying their appeals to the Pope in Rome, to secure the right to have a cemetery of their own, or perhaps a Baptismal font. Mabe had a font from the very beginning, I believe, so that issue was never raised, as was the case at St. Ives and elsewhere.

The disadvantages of being controlled by a non-resident incumbent whose main interest and concern was another parish, in which he resided, is evident throughout the entire history of Mabe parish and church. The church was simply a daughter-church, served by Curates who were appointed and dismissed at will by the Vicars of Mylor. These Curates, many of them at least, were lax and indifferent, especially in the matter of making proper records. There is no complete list of these Curates' names. We know some of them through casual mention made of them in various documents. At one time there was a vicarage, or priest's house, near Carnsew, at Burnt House, about a mile and a half from the parish church. It was probably given to the parish by some member of the Carnsew family, for in a survey of the Carnsew lands made in 1585 it is

noted that six-pence was paid to that estate "for the Cherche-howse at Mabe or the prestis (*i.e.*, priest's) howse." This disappeared during the period of confusion and decline that followed the Reformation.

In the year 1745 the Reverend George Turner, Vicar of Mylor, drew up a "terrier," as it was called, of "Mabe, alias Levapper, a Chapel of ease annexed to Mylor." In that terrier, or register, he noted that there was neither Glebeland nor vicarage, but added the following note: "It is said that our Minister did once reside in it (*i.e.*, the parish) and in a house adjoining a field yet called by his name Coad's Field, part of Mr. John Gwynn's Tenement." The Coad referred to was the Reverend Richard Coade (also spelled "Code") Curate of Mabe in 1787 and 1791.

Among the several disadvantages which Mabe suffered as a consequence of being a Peculiar parish in the episcopal fief was the fact that it involved the probate of Mabe wills at Exeter. It is not difficult to understand how, quite often, this was a serious drawback, increasing both the delay and the cost of settling estates. Probate of the will disposing of even the least estate had to be in the Bishop's Peculiar Court at Exeter. Among the old wills that are preserved in the Probate Registry at Exeter is that of James Spergor (Spargo) of Lavape (Mabe). It was proved in 1555 A.D., in the reign of the Tudor queen, Mary the First. It bequeathed a *yeo* to the *Yeld* of the Holy Ghost in the Church of *St. Loo*. In modern English that means that he left a female sheep (ewe) to the Gild of the Holy Ghost in the Church of St. Laud. The will made a further bequest which was, however, conditional. James Spargo expressed the wish to be buried "within the Church of *St. Lowe*." Upon condition that this was permitted and his desire fulfilled he bequeathed a two-year-old heifer to the Church Store. The spelling of the name of St. Laud more or less phonetically in two different ways, as St. Loo and St. Lowe, was charactertistic of the time.

To make the terms of the will of James Spargo understandable to readers of today, I make this brief explanation: As in many churches then and earlier, in St. Laud's, the parish church of Mabe, there were two altars. The

high or main altar, according to the general custom, was dedicated to the patron Saint of Mabe, St. Laud or, as in Breton, St. Lo. This Saint is said to have been consecrated Bishop of Coutances in 525 A.D. His fame as a Saint rested mainly upon the story of a miracle performed by him at Coutances, when he restored the sight of a blind girl. There was a second altar in the church which was dedicated to, or under the patronage of, the Holy Ghost. This altar was placed in one of the aisles. I am not certain that these two were the only altars in the church. My opinion is that, at some times, there were more than two.

Each altar was managed by a Yeld or Gild of its own. Each Gild had its own funds and properties, called its "Store" or "Stock." So James Spargo's gift of a "yeo" was to the Gild which maintained the side altar that was called the Altar of the Holy Ghost. His conditional bequest of a two-year-old heifer was for the Church Store, that is, the general church fund. Bequests of live animals to churches as such, and to gilds within churches, were common. As a rule the wardens of the gilds rented such animals to farmers in the parish or sold them for slaughtering. Thomas Fraunces of Lavape in his will that is also dated 1555, bequeathed a Ewe to the Store of St. Lowe. There is another will, that of Richard John, of Lavape, dated 1557, which bequeathed two pence to the Store of St. Loo and two pence to "the Trinity at Sonday," that is to say, the Chapel of the Holy Trinity at St. Day, which was a noted shrine to which many pilgrims journeyed.

The period of these wills is that of the reaction from the extreme bigotry and injustice which attended the Reformation and of the restoration of the old forms of worship, and along with these the confiscated church properties, ordered by Queen Mary the First. All three of the wills were witnessed by Sir Richard Thomas, who apparently was the Curate of Levape, otherwise Mabe. His immediate predecessor was Richard Anhee, which name later became "Anhay," "Hay" and also "Haye." This man was Curate in 1549 A.D., when the Royal Commissioners made an inventory of the church goods for confiscation. The date of the inventory is April 24, 1549 A.D.,

and it is interesting to note that the name of the parish is spelled Mape. The possessions of the parish are listed as follows: "One Velvet Satin Cope; three Velvet Sets of Vestments; two latten (latin) Candlesticks; two silver Chalices; two bells and two Sacring-bells."

The two Sacring bells were what we now know as Sanctus-bells, but probably somewhat larger than those now used. They were usually hung in a small cot over the chancel, but sometimes were suspended over the rood-screen. From the fact that there were two of these Sacring-bells we infer that one was used at the high, or main, altar, dedicated to St. Laud, and the other to the side aisle altar, dedicated to the Holy Ghost. The other two bells were used for calling people to worship. The vestments were probably sold and cut up for secular uses. The silver chalices were no doubt sent, with all the rest of the church plate in the district, to St. Mawes Castle to await shipment to the Royal Mint to be melted up. But in 1553 Mary came to the throne and ordered the return to the churches of all their plate which had not already been broken or melted up. From the list that is still preserved at the Public Record Office, in London, we learn that "Lavappe" received back its two chalices and patens, which weighed twenty-nine ounces. The respite was short-lived. In 1558 A.D., Elizabeth ascended the throne. Protestantism was again militant and on the ascendant. Once again vestments were destroyed, some churches despoiled and many altars profaned and defaced.

I have dwelt upon these incidents gleaned from ancient records for the principal reason that they prove, quite conclusively, that to the time of the Reformation what may be termed the *cultus* of St. Laud prevailed in Mabe. Here, as elsewhere in England, the English Church underwent a great change in the generation that followed the Act of Settlement of 1560 A.D. However, the Sunday nearest to the twenty-first of September, which is St. Laud's Day, is always observed as the Feast of Mabe parish.

VIII

I do not know just when, or why, or by whom the church was named after St. Laud of Coutances. Probably the fabric itself would tell me when, at least, if I knew more about it and had the necessary learning to understand and interpret that knowledge. Without being dogmatic, for which I have not the requisite scholarship, but with proper humility, I proffer the opinion that the association of the name of the good Bishop Laud of Coutances with the ancient monastery church of Levabe (Mabe) may have begun as early as during the reign of Edward the Confessor, who died in January, 1066 A.D.

We know that Edward brought many people from Normandy. They infiltrated every part of England and profoundly affected it. Many of them became the owners of lands which Englishmen had possessed until the Norman strangers came under the protection of Edward. It does not appear to be fanciful merely to suggest that these early Normans, during the reign of the Saxon Edward the Confessor, may well have brought with them the cult of venerating St. Laud. More definitely to the point, we know that during the Norman period, particularly from 1100 A.D., when Henry the First came to the throne, but to some extent even earlier, during the reign of William the Conqueror, Norman lords who had become the principal landowners in many localities, extensively rebuilt and enlarged the old monastic oratories and baptisteries, to make them suitable for use by their tenants as parish churches.

As I remember it, in my youth the nearest group of houses to Mabe Church was considerably more than a mile distant. Each farm had its own "church way," a footpath across the fields from the farmhouse to the church by the shortest line possible. The same condition is found, or used to be, in many parts of Cornwall, and visitors are

puzzled by it until the reason for it is explained to them. The ancient monasteries were purposely established in secluded places, at some distance from villages and towns. When their oratories, baptisteries and dwellings and lands were confiscated to the church dioceses, it was natural that parish churches were built upon the old monastic properties, often making use of the oratories and baptisteries.

It is generally believed that what I may call the Norman enlargement of Mabe Church was identical in size and form with the nave and chancel of the church of today. The ancient foundations remain and sustain the present walls of the nave and chancel. I think that some part of the north wall was in the original structure, that is, the Norman enlargement dating from about 1100 A.D. With that possible exception, all that remains of the Norman church is the foundation of the nave and chancel. Most of the craftsmen employed on the Norman enlargement were brought over from Normandy for the purpose, the native people, mostly serfs, being used only as unskilled laborers to assist the artificers. But during the period from 1420 A.D., to 1520 A.D., a great change took place in the condition of the people in Cornwall as elsewhere throughout England. The serfs emancipated themselves. Management of their parish churches by the people themselves followed as an immediate consequence. And their improved standards of living found noble expression in their desire and determination to enlarge and improve their church edifices.

In these conditions arose the widespread movement of the people for rebuilding and enlarging old churches and building new ones. And, as part of that popular movement, by the middle of the fifteenth century we find a new type of architecture fairly established in Cornwall, the style we call Cornish Perpendicular, of which the church at Mabe is a good example. In this type of church architecture the Norman influence is evident, both in general design and ornamentation. But the lines are simpler and the craftsmanship is coarser and less particular. The coarse "moorstone," or surface moorland granite, which the Normans never used because of its coarseness was now

used extensively. It was abundant and to be had without cost, and at hand. Had there been no other factor to account for it, the cruder and coarser craftsmanship would have resulted, inevitably, from the quality of the stone used. There is a simplicity and a forthrightness in these fifteenth century Cornish churches which constitute their principal charm.

But the Cornish people built lighter and less gloomy churches than the Normans built. They had abundant light and air and did not require the burning of incense to kill off bad odours! And while their craftsmanship was rather primitive and clumsy, so that fine Norman carvings which they copied are crude, sometimes almost to the point of being grotesque, there are evidences on every hand that the Cornish people of that early day were sensitive to beauty. In a surprising number of the Cornish churches remains of alabaster reredoses attest to that fact. What remains of the one in Mabe church is eloquent evidence that it was a work of great beauty, most exquisitely carved, vividly colored and richly gilded. Indicated by the fragments are The Flagellation of Christ and the martyrdom of some early bishop.

This beautiful reredos, like so many others, was smashed durng the frenzy of the Reformation. It was executed in the early part of the fifteenth century, probably in Nottingham or Derbyshire, where much of the best work of this sort in alabaster was done. Another feature of the church in the fifteenth century was the font, which remained in use right down to 1870, the date of the disastrous Restoration. At that time, the early fifteenth century font was replaced by a new one and the old one buried under the floor of the chancel! All that I have learned about this is the fact that at the time of the general restoration of the church it was thought desirable to get a "better looking font" and the old one was buried under the chancel to prevent it from being desecrated by its use for non-religious purposes. That was a fairly common practice. But what perverse piety it was!

The old church suffered during the Reformation at the hands of misguided zealots and fanatics. And after the

Reformation until the middle of the nineteenth century it suffered still more from neglect, the logical result of its status as a Peculiar parish. In the year 1674 A.D., the wardens of the church at Mabe took the extraordinary step of making a formal complaint to the Bishop of Exeter that the Reverend Edward White, then Vicar of Mylor, had not visited Mabe in three years. In his letter to the Bishop explaining his neglect of Mabe, the good vicar said that he had been in ill health, but that the Vicar of Constantine parish, the Reverend John Daniell, had fully supplied the needs of Mabe by holding one service each fortnight on a Sunday.

Excluded from the Archdeaconry of Cornwall, as a Peculiar of the Bishop of Exeter, Mabe was the victim of episcopal indifference and neglect. Its dependency upon Mylor, which lasted right down to the year 1850, was a continuous blight. Then, in 1866, already in a sad state of decay and disrepair, lightning struck the old church and almost ruined a part of it. Then the people of the parish were aroused and a movement to "restore" the church was soon under way. An architect, Piers St. Aubyn by name, was employed to restore the building and make it fit for Divine worship. Notwithstanding his old and honored Cornish name, Mr. Piers St. Aubyn, had not the least appreciation of or reverence or affection for the fine relic of Cornish Perpendicular architecture of the early fifteenth century, or, for that matter, any Cornish memorial or relic. Victoria's consort, Albert of Coburg, could not have had any less.

Rarely, if ever, was worse crime committed against art, against history, and against decency, than was committed at Mabe under the guise of "restoration." Mr. Piers St. Aubyn manifested an amazing ingenuity for discovering wrong things to do and how to do them most offensively and effectively. The church of old was floored with large granite slabs, upon many of which were inscriptions, the memorials of people who through the centuries had been buried within the church. And there were other memorial tablets upon the walls. Some of the latter and all of the floor slabs were thrown out and replaced by a floor of

meaningless tiles as lacking in distinctive taste as any-
thing ever produced anywhere in the worst phases of Vic-
torian debasement. The "restoration" that took place in
1870 was a defilement of a noble relic of Cornish cultural
history. Sacking by an enemy invader could have done no
more harm.

I have already mentioned the fact that, until 1852,
when they were abolished, the Church courts had juris-
diction over many matters, civil and criminal, including
probate and prosecutions for slander, immorality, suits for
divorce, suits for payment of rates and taxes and so on.
The Bishop of Exeter did not himself preside at these
courts in Cornwall, except in very rare and exceptional
cases. As a rule, he designated some one to hold the courts
for him, the designated person being always described as
the Bishop's Official. Very often the person named by the
Bishop for this service was a rector of some parish and in
such cases the tribunals were set up in the churches of the
presiding officers. Thus, in 1595, the Bishop's Official,
who was the rector of St. Erme Church, in Kenwyn parish,
set up the tribunal in his church. He had before him one
William Bowden, of Mabe, who was charged with adul-
terous misconduct with his maid servant, Margery Tre-
vissa. He was found guilty and sentenced to do penance,
standing on a white sheet, on three occasions, as follows:
Once in Exeter Cathedral, once in Mabe church and once
in the public market, in Penryn.

The sentence probably reflected the belief that, for most
men, ridicule is a terrible punishment. Although there is
no record that the court imposed this sentence as an alter-
native to the payment of a fine, it appears that the alterna-
tive was a fine, for William Bowden managed to square
himself by paying three pounds, six shillings and eight
pence.

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In the Public Record Office in London there is a terrier showing the land holdings and valuations in the "Parish of Lavabe, A Chapel, Annexed to Miler." This shows that in 1522 A.D., there were twenty-three freeholders owning land in the parish. Of these landowners only three lived in the parish, and one of the three was Richard Spergor (Spargo) who owned land at Spargo Veor, that is, Lower Spargo. The other two men were John Tremoughe, of Tremough, and John Bosvathek, who owned freeholds at Helland, Lower Spargo and Tremough. The largest landowner was the Bishop of Exeter, the next largest was William Carnsuyoue (Carnsew) of Carnsew, and the third largest was the Earl of Oxford. According to valuation, the next three were Richard Spergor (Spargo), John Bosvathek and Simon Lamanva, the last named a non-resident. Expressed in terms of pounds sterling, the value of these landownings seems very small by today's measure, but the value of money was then much higher. The valuation of the Bishop of Exeter's holdings was three pounds sterling, that of the holdings of William Carnsuyoue two pounds ten shillings and of the Earl of Oxford's two pounds. The holdings of Richard Spergor (Spargo), Simon Lamanva and John Bosvathek were each valued at one pound. Other holdings were valued as low as four shillings only.

A list of the inhabitants of Mabe in that same year, 1522 A.D., gives the value of the goods of each inhabitant who was at the head of a household, with the number and kind of arms they could furnish when called upon. According to this list, there were three Spergos (Spargos), Richard, John and James. I think that John and James were the sons of Richard. They could furnish a Jack, Salet and Bill, which means, I think, that one of them armed with

a halberd, and with a helmet and coat of mail was available on call. Four men were listed as having "Bow and Arrows." It is interesting that the valuation of Richard Spergo's goods was the highest of any, namely, fifteen pounds sterling. Next in order came Richard Hafossowe, thirteen pounds, six shillings and eight pence. Third in order came Jankyn Etheren, with ten pounds. Most of the others were listed at three pounds or less.

Little more than three hundred years later, in the list of Landowners, Estates and Acreage in Mabe in 1839, in the Tithe Award, the only name that was in the above lists of 1522 A.D., was that of Spargo. The Bishop of Exeter still headed the list in 1839 as his predecessor did three centuries earlier. All except one of the family names of the sixteenth century and earlier had disappeared by 1839, two years after the accession of Victoria. Only that of Spargo remained. James Spargo then owned three acres at Antron, which he farmed along with some additional rented acreage. He was my great-grandfather.

I have not attempted to compile a genealogical record of our family, or a family history. My undertaking has been much more modest. I have brought together a few little known facts and records in order that those who now bear the name Spargo, and their children, may have some idea of the origin, and the antiquity, of their family.

In the course of my lifetime I have encountered three or four people who spelled their name "Spargoe," and in every instance they were able to trace their ancestry back to Mabe or one of the four parishes adjoining it. Very often, no matter how plainly I write my own name, I receive replies addressed to John "Spargoe." Did I not know otherwise, therefore, it would be natural for me to suppose that some such carelessness or indifference in the matter of spelling was responsible for the fact that some people, whose connection with our family can not be questioned, have an "e" at the end of their name. But the truth is otherwise and is of some interest.

On the map the old road from Penzance to Falmouth is indicated. In the old days, the mail-coach, which was drawn by three horses, made the journey in either direction

in five hours. Burnt House was a stopping point, where the horses were rested. Close by was a steep hill, which was called "Spargoe's Hill." In 1830, at the foot of this hill, about a mile from Penryn, while the driver was off the coach, the horses ran all the way to Falmouth and stopped at the usual place for taking off the mails near the Falmouth Toll-gate, without the slightest damage to the coach. The wonder of this was told as a tale for the next hundred years.

Now, "Spargoe's Hill," as the steep hill above Penryn was called for more than a century, was named for one of the Spargo family. There were some brothers and a host of cousins, all of whom spelled their name in the same way —Spargo. But there was one of several brothers who wanted to be differentiated in some way. So he added an "e" to his name and insisted that the "e" be clearly pronounced. So the name, in his case, was pronounced Spargo —ee. My father's father, John Spargo, of Penryn, surely one of the most lovable men the County of Cornwall ever produced, used to delight in mimicking the peculiarities of this cousin who insisted that he be called "Spargo-ee."

In the course of these notes I have more than once referred to the Cornish language. To guard against possible misunderstanding, I warn my readers that by the "Cornish language" I do not mean the so-called old Cornish dialect in which, half a century ago, writers told simple little stories and tales in a literary medium that was supposed to be an approximation to the speech of the uneducated people of the generation then fast dying. It was a dialect in the sense in which that term is commonly used. The spoken form of it combined several features.. It included many words and idioms peculiar to this region and not used elsewhere in England.

It also included pronunciations of ordinary English words and idioms not encountered elsewhere. These pronunciations arose among the uneducated people and by repetition and general usage became standardized. Finally, it also included certain modes of speech, vocal mannerisms not connected with pronunciation, but with tonal peculiarities, inflections of the voice, and the like. The written

form consisted of an approximate representation of these things by a crude form of phonetic spelling, the same sort of device that Josh Billings used in this country in his Yankee yarns. In all respects except one the literary form of the dialect was at once easy and satisfactory. But in that one respect success was never reached, even by the most gifted. The variant vocal mannerisms of which I have spoken, consisting of peculiarities of vocal inflection and intonation, differing greatly in very small areas, can not be represented by ingenuity of spelling. A simple question, like "How are you?", or "Where are you going?", would sound so differently in Penryn and Camborne, for example, that a Camborne man would laugh at the way the questions were spoken by a Penryn man. The latter would be equally amused by the manner in which the questions were spoken by a Camborne man. Yet the two towns are only about ten miles apart. The Penryn man would speak in a musical sing-song way which no Cambornian could manage.

By people who could remember when most of their elders spoke so, and by others who knew at least some people who still did so, the homely stories and verses, generally humorous, about such things as Timothy Towser's "crowst," Zacky Bolitho's dunkey, or the "sperret en Jenifer's spence," were read or listened to with delight. For aught I know, people still read aloud for their own and others' amusement about the "boay thut clunked a bully" or about Jan Tresedder who "stanked pon a stane'" and "knacked 'ees nuddick in." But I suspect that a great many words and idioms of the jargon which only old people used when I was a boy, or, with few exceptions, understood, have been forgotten by all save a few people whose minds have a natural bent for things antiquarian.

Many of the words in the old vernacular sounded as strangely as they looked in print. For example: "nackin," for handkerchief; "bully," for pebble; "belve," for weeping aloud; "nuddick," for nape of the neck; "faggied," for contrived or devised; "paddick," for a pitcher made of coarse red earthenware; "havage," for family origin, parentage; "fanging," for earnings; "dagging," intense longing, used

in connection with a strong desire to do something; "stira-coose," a descriptive epithet applied to a bustling, particularly energetic woman; "spence," for a closet built under a stairway; "droozenhead," for a very stupid person; "quizzling," for grinning; "fadging," for faring, getting along; "foathy," for intrusive forwardness; "lerruper," for very big; "clome," for earthenware; "clunked," for swallowed; "tinged," for tied; "stank," for stepped heavily; "squinnied," for squinted; "pattick," for fool; "cheeldvean," for a very young child of either sex; "coore," for a working period of eight hours underground in a mine; "crowst," for lunch; "mabyer," for young fowl, a pullet; "bassam," for blue; "maazegary," for a crazy, half-witted person. These are but a few of the many words that I remember.

By most people of my parents' generation, I believe, it was assumed that most words such as the foregoing, peculiar to Cornish speech, were surviving remnants of the ancient Cornish language. I am speaking of ordinary people, not of scholars. But when I got to know something of the Cornish language I soon realised that the dialect or vernacular contained very few words derived from that source. There are, to be sure, a number of words which appear to have come from the ancient tongue. "Mabyer," a domestic fowl in the pullet stage, is probably from old Cornish. So, too, is "clunk," meaning swallow, which I think may have come from "clynk." The noun "pattick," meaning fool, is likewise of old Cornish derivation, I think. But for every word derived from the ancient Cornish-celtic language, there must be more than a score that are the purest English, spoken as they were in Elizabethan times, and earlier. These survivals of Elizabethan and medieval English resemble similar survivals in certain isolated localities in our own South. When I worked as a "buddle-booay" in a tin-mine, neither I nor any of the men and boys with whom I worked knew that the term was good medieval English, not ignorant local jargon, as we supposed. Words like "havage" and "tine" (meaning to light) were still used in Cornwall in my boyhood. In Shakespeare's and Milton's time they were in common use throughout England.

There were survivals of the speech of Shakespeare and Milton also outside of the speech of people with no education or very little, in the speech of people of culture and refinement. My paternal grandfather, John Spargo, whom I remember affectionately and well, would say "I censure," for "I am of the opinion," just as Shakespeare wrote, and he would say that he had been "commercing" with his friends, meaning that he had been conversing with them, exactly the same use of the word found in Milton. He was a man of considerable education and learning.

In addition to the rare occurrence of words of Cornish-celtic origin and the more numerous words surviving from the speech of medieval England, the jargon or dialect contained many words which might be called local inventions. Slang words, and nick-names for things, got crystallized in speech as local colloquialisms. Strange words, uncouth to the eye when printed and to the modern ear when spoken, for which the philologist can give no explanation, must have come into existence in some such manner.

The Celtic dialects proper, or languages, if that term is less confusing, fall into three major divisions. First, the language of the ancient Gauls, of which we have no written remains and concerning which we know little. There are place-names which we know from Caesar were Gaulish. Some of these names evidently are related closely to other forms of Celtic language, such as Irish and Welsh. Second, there is the Goidelic division, which includes Irish-Gaelic, Scottish-Gaelic, and Manx-Gaelic, the latter being related much more closely to the Gaelic of the Scotch than to that of the Irish. Third, there is the Brythonic division, which embraces Breton, the language of Brittany, Welsh, the language of Wales and Cornish, the language of ancient Cornwall.

That there is a very close relation between Breton and Welsh and Cornish would be obvious to one who, without having any scientific knowledge of the subject, had enough curiosity to set side by side and compare a few examples printed in each language. In the case of both Breton and Welsh there are numerous printed books, making a considerable literature, and this has facilitated their compara-

tive study. In the case of Cornish, we have a language that is almost wholly without a literature. No books were ever printed in Cornish, though a small body of Cornish manuscript exists. It was almost exclusively a spoken language. It is difficult, therefore, to make intelligent comparisons with the other two, Breton and Welsh, in a way that the average person can understand.

Scholars divide both Breton and Welsh into periods which roughly correspond in each case. The periods are designated as early, middle and modern. The first extends from the seventh to the eleventh centuries; the second from the eleventh to the seventeenth; the third from the seventeenth century to our own time. When the Breton of the first period is compared with the Welsh of the first period, the two are found to be remarkably alike. The differences in the two languages are much greater in the second period. Possibly the infiltration of French into the Breton was in some part responsible for this. That is a question upon which philologists have sharply disagreed. What is of greater importance to us in this discussion is the fact that the Breton of the second or middle period resembled Cornish of the same period much more closely than it resembled Welsh. So close was the Breton of this period to the Cornish that an eminent authority has given it as his opinion that as late as 1400-1600 a Cornishman and a Breton would probably have been able to understand each other. In much the same way Scottish Gaelic and Manx were so closely alike in many important respects, it is said, that people who knew one of the two languages could both understand and be understood by people speaking the other, at least sufficiently for simple intercourse.

But if Breton and Cornish were closer than either was to Welsh, it is obvious that Cornish and Welsh are definitely related. Any person able to read Welsh would find it easy to identify many words in Cornish and thus make a fair guess at the general meaning of the page or passage he examined. The fact that no books were printed in Cornish, while in both Breton and Welsh there is a considerable and important literature makes comparative study difficult, but there is nothing in the Cornish language to

compare with the Welsh *Mabinogion*. The question may be asked, "Why was it that no books were printed in the Cornish language, just as they were printed in Breton, Irish-Gaelic, Welsh, Manx and so on?"

That fact resulted, I think, from the removal of the See of Cornwall to Exeter and the linking of the two dioceses from the middle of the eleventh century, 1050, to the last quarter of the nineteenth century, 1876. It was inevitable that special Cornish interests should be neglected under that arrangement. The successive bishops of Exeter, however earnest and solicitous for the spiritual well-being of the Cornish people that might be, neither understood the Cornish people nor cared at all for their language or customs. It is not unfair to say that from the viewpoint of most of the bishops of Exeter Cornwall was important mainly as a source of revenue. The Cornish language was not spoken north of the Tamar, where most of the interests of the bishops were.

When the Reformation came it did not bring to Cornwall the great intellectual gains it brought elsewhere. In Ireland, for example, it brought Bedell's translation of the Bible into Irish and Knox's translation of the Prayer Book, the Protestant clergy giving encouragement and aid to the people in learning to read their own language. So, too, in Wales, where the Welsh translation of the Bible by Bishop Morgan was quickly followed by a Welsh version of the Book of Common Prayer. The influence of Henry VII, who was wont to pride himself on his Welsh ancestry, gave an enormous impetus to Welsh literature in the vernacular of the people. In the case of Manx, spoken by the people of the Isle of Man, the Manx translation of the Book of Common Prayer, by Bishop Phillips, published in 1610 A.D., did more than lay the foundation for a considerable Manx literature: more important even than that was the fact that, as a literary language, Manx became the vehicle for the diffusion of new ideas and ideals. No attempt was made to render the Bible into Cornish or to translate the Book of Common Prayer into the language which practically all the Cornish people spoke. That is why there is no great Cornish literature, and why no books were printed

in the language. By the time Methodism came into Cornwall it was too late to be of any help. In Wales, as we have seen, Methodism found the vernacular well established as a literary language, which it could use to advantage. In Cornwall Methodism found no such instrument available.

Let there be no misunderstanding of my purpose in making these observations. It has seemed to me worth while to point out that in Cornwall the Reformation did not enrich the vernacular and make it a literary language as it did the Welsh, Irish and Manx, as well as others. It seemed to me to be of interest, and some possible service, to point out the historical reason for the Cornish peculiarity in this respect. However, I am not contending, or suggesting, that Cornwall suffered any great misfortune in the fact that the Reformation did not arrest the decline of its ancient language and raise it to new and higher levels. It is by no means certain, in my judgment, that the revival of Irish Gaelic has been of any advantage to the Irish people. When I lived in Wales I was profoundly impressed by the inescapable evidence of the progressive weakening of the Welsh language by the unceasing infiltration of English words. It made the fierce devotion of many of my Welsh friends to "Cymraeg" seem pathetic.

In Cornish three miracle plays, parts of others, scores of sermons by various divines have survived, together with some poems and collections of proverbs and epigrams. It was a clergyman named Moreman, of Menheniot, who was the first Cornish priest to teach his parishoners the Lord's Prayer in English. That was during the reign of Henry the Eighth. In the middle of the seventeenth century, 1640, at Foeck, near Truro, the sacrament was still administered in Cornish, and it is recorded that the incumbent of Lizard Point preached in Cornish in 1678. It is frequently said that the last person who could speak the Cornish language was Dolly Pentreath, who died at one hundred and two years of age, in 1788 or thereabout. But no scholar today accepts that as a literal fact. There is more or less evidence that Cornish was spoken by a few people in isolated places some years after Dolly Pentreath had passed away.

There can be no doubt, I think, that Cornish was a more pleasing language to the ear than either Welsh or Irish. That is the opinion of most authorities on the subject, and it would appear to be so because of its structure. Fifty-odd years ago the rector of Camborne parish, Canon Chappel, was fond of quoting what he said were proverbs in the ancient Cornish tongue. My mother's uncle, James Spargo, a well-known and highly respected man, indulged in the same habit. The two men would discuss Cornish archeology, mythology and history at great length whenever there was opportunity to do so. Above the mantelpiece in Uncle James's house hung a framed motto reading

Gura da, rag ta honan te yu gura.

Freely translated, that means "Do good, thou dost it for thyself." Another proverb in the ancient tongue ran like this: *Nyn ges gun heb lagas, na kei heb scovern,* which may be rendered into English thus: "There is no downs without eye, no hedge without ears." I was very happy to find both of these proverbs in Cyrus Redding's Illustrated Itinerary of the County of Cornwall, published in 1842, a copy of which I obtained only last year. From the same source I quote two stanzas from an ancient comic pastoral in Cornish:

> "*Pelea era why moaz moz, fettow, teag,*
>   *Gen agaz bedgeth gwin, ha agaz blew mellyn?*"
> "*Mi a moaz tha'n venton, sarra wheag,*
>   *Rag delkiow sevi gwra muzi teag.*"
>
> "*Pea ve moaz gen a why, moz, fettow, teag,*
>   *Gen agaz bedgeth gwin, ha agaz blew mellyn?*"
> "*Greuh mena why, sarra wheag,*
>   *Rag delkiow sevi gwra muzi teag.*"*

The custom of rubbing strawberry leaves on the face to improve the complexion prevailed among Cornish girls and young women in my youth.

* "Pray whither so trippingly, pretty fair maid,
    With your face rosy-white, and your soft yellow hair?"
  "Sweet sir, to the well in the summer-wood shade,
    For strawberry leaves make the young maiden fair."
  "Shall I go with you, pretty fair maid, to the wood,
    With your face rosy-white, and your soft yellow hair?"
  "Sweet sir, if you please, it will do my heart good,
    For strawberry leaves make the young maiden fair."

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I wish that it were possible for me to close this sketch with a satisfactorily informative account of the first Spargo known to have settled in this country. Among many other vague and uncertain recollections of things heard in childhood are some that have a bearing upon this matter. One story that I have remembered is of one who was usually referred to as "Yankee Spargo." If he was ever otherwise referred to, the fact made no impression upon my mind. His baptismal name I do not know. According to the version of the story that I have stored in my memory and told at various times, this man, ardent and impetuous supporter of the cause of American Independence, made his way to America, enlisted in the American army, married an American girl, had a family in America but returned to Cornwall, where he spent the rest of his life.

Another story of the migration of a Cornish Spargo to America in the late eighteenth century, I now suspect to have been another version of the tradition already related. But when I was a child the relation of the tale of "Yankee Spargo" was almost certain to evoke the telling of one Spargo from Constantine who was seized by a press-gang, impressed into service in the Royal Navy, deserted his ship in America and became an American soldier and a citizen of the United States. As I recall the tale, he married the daughter of a rich plantation owner and prospered. But he became homesick and returned to his native Cornwall on a visit and died there. Whether these are two different versions of the same simple mixture of fact and fancy, history and mythology, I do not know. But when I reflect that adown the centuries so many men of my name and breed have sailed the seas, both in the merchant and naval services, I am inclined to attribute both tales to distorted recollections of some old sea-dogs' yarns. My own vague

and dim memories doubtless add something to the distortion of the tales.

About twenty years ago I stumbled across the fact that in 1790, in the town of Stonington, New London County, Connecticut, there lived one Edward Spargo, his wife and two children, one son and one daughter. While looking for entirely different information I found the record of this Edward Spargo in the Report of the Census of 1790. From time to time during the period since that discovery I have searched in the archives of Connecticut for additional information, but with scant success. I have employed professional researchers on a few occasions, to check source materials I could not examine personally. What I have found out is very little and can be told in a few sentences. That he was the head of a household of four we know from the census record. That he owned his dwelling and land we know, for in the records of Stonington we find that, on April 4, 1793, he sold his dwelling and land to William Lues.* That his daughter, Sally Spargo, married Nathan Noyes, at Stonington, November 5, 1797. That he himself was married to Katherine Belcher,† of Newport, Rhode Island, on December 26, 1769, the marriage being performed by the Reverend Gardiner Thurston, pastor of the Second Baptist Church. That from May sixth to September fifteenth, 1775, he served in the Sixth Company of Colonel Parsons' Sixth Regiment of Connecticut, and that in levies of 1789 in the regiments of the Connecticut Line he served again from July eighteenth to the ninth of December of that year. The name is given as "Edward Sparger," but there is not the least doubt that this is the man whose name was variously spelled "Sparger," "Spargar" and "Spargo," who under the latter spelling—the correct one—was listed in the 1790 census and in the property records of Stonington.‡

Arnold, whose monumental work is indispensable to the student of Rhode Island history and genealogy, gives the marriage date on page 366 of the seventh volume of

* *Stonington Land Deeds*, Vol. 13, p. 325.
† *Stonington Vital Records*, Vol. 4, p. 106.
‡ *Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the War of the Revolution, War of 1812 and Mexican War*, pp. 75; 239.

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his *Vital Record of Rhode Island, 1636-1850,* as December 26, 1769, but earlier, on page 333, the year is given as 1767. Wheeler, the historian of Stonington, states that the marriage was performed by the Reverend Gardiner Thurston on December 26, 1769. I assume that this date is the correct one and that the other is a typographical error. Arnold, in both places, gives the name of the groom as Edward *Sparger.* There can be no doubt that it is the same man whose name is given in the 1790 census of the inhabitants of Stonington as Edward Spargo.

In his genealogy of the Noyes family, Wheeler records the marriage of Sally Spargo or *Sparger* to Nathan Noyes, at Stonington, of which place both were residents, on November 5, 1797. He states that Sally was the daughter of Edward Spargo or Sparger who was married, on December 26, 1769, to Katherine Belcher, at Newport, Rhode Island. Wheeler adds that Sally was sometimes called Sally or Sarah Belcher, because for a long time she resided with her uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. John Belcher. But in the *Vital Records* of Stonington, page 106 of the fourth volume, in the record of the marriage, her name is correctly given as Sally Spargo, daughter of Edward Spargo. Nine children were born of the marriage: Mary, Nancy, Nathan, Eliza M., Francis B. (Belcher), Clementina, Lydia S. (Spargo), Frances E. and James S. (Spargo).

I do not know from what source James N. Arnold derived his list of the marriages performed by the Reverend Gardiner Thurston. Mr. Herbert O. Brigham, the distinguished librarian of the Newport Historical Society, and his assistant, Miss Hull, kindly checked Arnold's list against the original manuscript book of Thurston's records. A line by line reading and checking of the original manuscript record was made without the discovery of any mention of this marriage. That the manuscript record is incomplete is well-known. The first marriage recorded is numbered seventy-three and dated May the first, 1761. Seventy-two marriages, presumably of earlier date than May the first, 1761, are not included. There are some repetitions and there are obvious omissions—considerable periods in which no entries were made, but during which

marriages must have taken place and may have been performed by the Reverend Thurston but unrecorded. There is nothing to discredit Arnold's record in the fact that the marriage of Edward Sparger (Spargo) is not recorded in the original manuscript book.

It was my hope that it would be possible for me to unearth some additional information concerning this Edward Spargo, of Newport, Rhode Island, and Stonington, Connecticut: perhaps something about his antecedents, and, if not that, something about his life after he disappeared from Stonington, in 1793, perhaps the place and date of his death. To this end, from time to time I made cursory investigations in Rhode Island and in the National Archives, in Washington. Admittedly they were limited and inadequate. Perhaps a more exhaustive research would disclose additional information and enable us to tell from whence he came and when and where he died. Perhaps in some not-too-distant future some other man or woman of our name and kindred will make that research and attain that reward.

In the meantime I wonder sometimes whether Edward Spargo, of Newport, Rhode Island, and Stonington, Connecticut, who married Katherine Belcher, of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, and was a soldier of the Revolution, was the impressed Cornish seaman, who deserted His Majesty's Navy and joined the American Colonists in their fight for independence? Was Katherine Belcher, of Providence Plantations, the "daughter of a rich plantation owner" in the old and dimly remembered story? Did Edward Spargo return to England after he sold his home in Stonington to William Lues? Really, I have no idea. That he was a Cornishman, and a kinsman of mine, is certain.

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